

## INVISIBLE

Chos skyong skyabs ཕྱ ཤ ཉ ཤ ཉ ཤ (Qiejiangjia 切江加)\*

Very early in the morning, I was roused by the blaring from Uncle's conch horn announcing that he hadn't offered incense at the top of the mountain. Instead, he was offering incense on the incense platform near our house. I covered my head with my quilt, pretending to sleep. Otherwise, Grandpa would have encouraged me to find Uncle and offer incense with him.

"Real men offer incense often. Otherwise, the deities won't help you when you need it," counseled Grandpa.

"How will they help me? Can I see them?"

"It depends on your behavior. If you offer incense daily, respect them, and ask for their help, they sense that and help you anytime you are in danger. The prerequisite is that you offer enough incense and respect."

"How and where can I meet them if I offer plenty of incense and respect them?"

"It takes time, but if you believe and act properly, you may meet one. They will appear in your dreams. You may chat with them in your dreams."

I heard many stories about deities when I was older. Khyab chen Deity in my home area is a mountain. No one knows when we offered him incense and made a *lab tse* for him. I heard a story from a local elder, Mgon po, who lives at the foot of Mount Khayb chen. He has never stopped offering incense to Khayb chen since his family moved there. It is his daily duty. A few years after living there, he stopped women from going to the top of the mountain and stopped female animals from grazing on the higher part of the mountain. Mgon bo maintained the mountain resembled a deity's body, so females may contaminate the deity because their identity is lower than males. He also forbade anyone from peeing on the

<sup>1</sup> Chos skyong skyabs. 2023. Invisible. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 63:392-393.

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mountaintop.

After doing this, a man on a white horse came into his dreams. He appeared on white clouds in the sky, stopped to chat for a while, and then disappeared into the sky. He cautioned Mgon po, "You will die if you talk to others about me."

Afterward, many surprising things happened to Mgon po. He dreamed the man with a white horse called him outside his house. Mgon po immediately went outside and saw thieves driving his yaks. The thieves fled. Another time, while offering incense on the mountain, he sensed something very near him but couldn't see anything. Later, watching his offerings fly from the flame into the air, he sensed that the invisible horseman was near him and immediately knew it was consuming his offerings. This greatly excited him.

After sharing this marvelous story with one of his friends, news spread through the local community. Later, Mgon po became mentally ill. When researchers and reporters visited and asked him about it, he was bewildered and couldn't speak clearly.

#### TIBETAN TERMS

chos skyong skyabs ཕྱ ག ཤ ཉ ག ཤ ཉ ཉ ཉ

khyab chen ཀ ད ཉ ཉ

lab tse ཀ ད ཉ

mgon po ມ ຖ ພ

#### CHINESE TERM

Qiejiangjia 切江加